11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Amharic proverb, and even the Emperor when visiting a school expects students to remain seated if they are at the dining table when he arrives.

Some indication of the comparative significance of this concern about eating and drinking in the Amhara psyche is afforded by a recent cross-cultural investigation of dreams. Obtained from samples of young male respondents in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the United States, the dreams were evaluated with respect to the presence or absence of themes of "manifest orality": scenes of someone desiring, looking for, or consuming food or drink. The proportion of Ethiopian respondents (mostly Orthodox Amhara from the Gondar area) who revealed manifest orality in their dreams was found to be *64 per cent.* By contrast, the proportion of those in a sample of non-Muslim Nigerians whose dreams showed manifest orality was 38 per cent, and that in the sample of Americans was only 22 per cent.[11]

The Amhara custom of giving *gurshā* plays up the erotic component of eating. *Gurshā* means "mouthful" and, as already noted, refers to a wad of food which one places in another's mouth, usually as a gesture of affection. *Gurshā* are exchanged between husband and wife and among relatives and friends. They are often given to children, especially in families of higher status, and to favored servants and retainers as well. The *gurshā* is of such meaning in Amhara experience that it is referred to in a number of Amharic idioms. First of all it means a present or a tip—literally, *pourmanger.* It also refers to the charge of a gun: the gun is a beloved object, and a *gurshā* is what one places in its mouth. In contemporary usage, it refers to flashlight batteries.

In connection with love and many other subjects, a good deal of the imagery of Amharic verse relates in one way or another to eating and drinking. The following sample of proverbs and couplets may convey some of the flavor of this phenomenon:

Ṭajj• has no specks; a poor man has no friends.

• • •

[Use] proverbs in conversation; [drink] *ṭajj* in a carafe.

• • •

Hand and fly-whisk; mouth and *ĭnjarā*† [go together].

• • •

No matter how much one plows, nothing tastes so good as *goman.*‡

• *Ṭajj,* it may be remembered, is the Ethiopian wine made of honey.

† *Ĭnjarā* is the staple pancake.

‡ *Goman* is a kind of cabbage plant that requires no plow cultivation.

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261 To make me forget you, this medicine is right:
• 271 Food and water, sleep and the night.
155
539

• • •

Love and porridge must be taken while hot;
Once cool, those who would taste are a lot.

• • •

The *ĭnjarā* I have, my lass;
I wait for you the *wat*• to pass.†

• • •

Your father and your mother have vowed to keep from meat;
But you, their very daughter, innards do you eat.‡

261 Eating and drinking provide expressive symbolism in social interaction as
264 well as in verse. They form the primary axis of social life among the Amhara.
271 The exchange of *gurshā* is but a specialized form of the general pattern of
155 expressing sociability through feeding and being fed. Camaraderie consists to
57 a large extent of eating from the same *ĭnjarā* basket, and the etymology of the word for "friend," *bălĭnjarā,* is the same as that for the English "com-
[203] panion," someone with whom one shares bread. At any indoor gathering barley beer is served continuously. The visit of a guest at any time of day calls for "a little coffee," a euphemism for as much food and drink as the
[776] host can command. In some Amhara areas a special kind of spirit, the *ţonin,* is assigned the specific task of punishing persons who infringe the etiquette of dispensing and receiving food.[12]

594 From this it is but a short step to politics and morals. The production of
155 large banquets is one of the essential arts of government in Abyssinia—
[554] *panem,* if not *circenses.* The stature of a big man depends partly upon the number of persons who customarily dine at his expense. A man's Christian-
577 ity, moreover, is judged by his generosity in feeding others, a virtue that is
554 eulogized at times by parading his *ĭnjarā* baskets around the field. A truly
574 Christian Amhara is known by the regularity and scale with which he pre-
155 pares memorial feasts for his departed kin, drinks in some religious fraternal
[735] association, and holds an annual feast (*zĭker*) in which food is distributed to the poor.

155 Oral activity is prominent, moreover, not only as a primary source of
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[263] • *Wat* is the sauce in which the *Injarā* is dipped.

† The gold meaning is: "I'll wait for you until the others leave."

‡ "To eat someone's innards" is an idiom meaning: "to make him fall in love." The gold meaning is thus: "You made me love you."